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Statement submitted by the World Organization for Early Childhood Education and the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Migrant and Refugee-Led Child Sensitive Social Protection Measures.

A Child Sensitive Approach.

We are witnessing in today's world an unprecedented level of human mobility. The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in recent years, reaching approximately 258 million in 2017. The UNHCR estimates that in 2017, there were 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, out of which 25.4 million were refugees.

Data gaps make it difficult to get a real sense of the scale and patterns of global migration. In many cases, data are not regularly collected, and quality is often poor. These problems are many times worse when it comes to data on migrant and forcibly displaced children, given the even greater challenges of measurement. Investment in improved data collection on migration and displacement, with a specific focus on children is essential to devise better polices, track progress, monitor the impact and implementation of measures.

Implementation of social protection policies and programs is fundamental to achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and to the realization of commitments made by United Nations Member States in the New York Declaration (NYD), in the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), and in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

Migrants and refugees are among the most excluded from even basic coverage by social protection instruments and schemes. According to the IOM Report on Migration and the 2030 Agenda, only an estimated 22% of migrants are covered by social protection, and only 1% of those moving between low-income countries have that right guaranteed. This dire situation currently exacerbates vulnerabilities, higher risk of poverty, exploitation and exposure to discrimination/marginalization, which is especially grave for children under 18, who represent a large part of people on the move.

Social protection, a core human right under international law, has increasingly been considered as an effective policy-level intervention for reducing vulnerability and extreme poverty, and for contributing to the development and structural transformation of a society.

In their capacity of providing responsive long-term systems, social protection programs, particularly in a migration context, can help to reduce poverty, inequality and deprivation, as well as stimulate human development, social peace and resilience. Social protection can play an important role in managing migration flows, stabilizing societies and encouraging economic development. These promising functions have, however, received surprisingly little attention from governments, academia or practitioners as strategies for reducing push factors for migration.

A well-established system of social protection in crisis contexts and in transit countries can reduce vulnerabilities and minimize risks, thereby building resilience in individuals and communities.

In countries of destination, facilitated access to social protection and scaling up from previously existing social protection systems is imperative for an effective response; migrants' regulatory status is commonly a crucial factor. Especially for those who migrate irregularly, protections may not exist and, even when they do, the fear of being expelled may inhibit access to governmental programs of social protection, engendering increased vulnerability. Other material barriers for migrants' access to social protection can be lack of documents attesting birth registration,

residency, and legal identity, language, informational gaps, discrimination, cultural differences among others.

Particularly affected by the lack of social protection are the migrants living in countries in crisis. They are disproportionally affected by the shocks of migration, to be in a country in crisis and to be excluded by social protection.

Therefore, there is an evident need for migrant-sensitive strategies with a child sensitive approach. To ensure effectiveness, predictability and a secure transition to a medium to long-term development strategy, it is crucial that governments, in collaboration with multi-stakeholder partners, find creative and contextually adaptable ways in building national social protection systems that are crisis responsive and migration sensitive.

It is important to note that establishing a transformative social protection agenda — that is, one that not only goes beyond protecting people against the risks associated with being poor, but also addresses the structural causes of poverty — requires a cooperative framework and a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

In this regard, recently, the role of refugee-led organizations (RLO) in promoting social protection activities is becoming more and more relevant in providing services such as birth registration, food, shelter, education and health care as well as advocacy.

This new strategy remains inadequately explored by academics, policymakers and practitioners.

Studies have shown positive results in direct service delivery that is culturally appropriate and delivered in the native language of the refugees and migrants with whom they share similar migration experiences, culture, traditions and values. Mitigation of trauma is more effective when the provider speaks the same language and understands the traumatic experience. Refugees can help fill the education gap by teaching children in their native language and curriculum. Women are empowered by working and being able to provide and protect their children.

Interesting examples of RLO initiatives are in Uganda and Kenya. In Nairobi, for example, refugee-led social businesses train both refugees and locals in arts and tailoring and reinvest profits from sales of their products into projects to support vulnerable children from both local and refugee communities with school fees.

In Kampala, RLO programs provide training for young people, with the aim of equipping them with the skills to support themselves and build a better future.

Social protection must begin with the youngest children 0–5 years old. An undesirable gap exists between traditional policies in social protection and the need to make specific provisions for early childhood, particularly for migrant and refugee children.

For the youngest refugee children, the developmental and psychological consequences of forced displacement can be devastating because the first five years of life play a vital role in the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour as well as in the capacity for later participation and productivity in their communities, workplaces and societies. The youngest refugee children require special attention, but they are commonly forgotten. Failure to intervene on their behalf will undoubtedly create negative consequences for the global community.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) alleviates childhood trauma, toxic stress and deprivation, crating the human and social capital needed for development and contributes to peace-building. It helps break the cycles of intergenerational transmission of economic and education poverty.

For example, IACTivism — Little Ripples in East Chad — is a sustainable, culturally relevant refugee-led Early Childhood Education program that overcomes barriers of access to education and integrates the community by hosting the preschool in the homes of refugees. Refugees are professionally trained in children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. They take ownership, lead the program and then train others.

The program is being replicated in another refugee context.

Recommendations:

1) Collect and share disaggregated data on migrants and refugees; facilitate refugee children's birth registration and move towards greater portability of documents, so that they may be accounted for and be able to access services including education and health care.

2) Recognize the critical role of social protection policy to the realization of the SDGs.

3) Promote a transformative social protection agenda that is crisis responsive and migration sensitive.

4) Fill the gap between traditional social protection policy and ECD.

5) Promote ECD in a migration context, as a transformative tool to build a cohesive and peaceful society.